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## THE HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF OUR N.Z. RITUAL

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Uniformity of working, and, to that end, official approval of some particular form of working, must from the very foundation of Grand Lodge have been topics of discussion amongst the brethren. Apparently the first formal reference to the matter was at the Annual Communication held at Christchurch in April 1898, when the report of R.W. Bro. A. Bartlett, Grand Superintendent (the original name for the office now called "Provincial Grand Master") of the Auckland District contained this passage:

"In the matter of Ritual, considerable difference of opinion still exists, and I may say that the actual work is as varied as opinion . . . With a view to promote uniformity of working, a Provincial Lodge of Instruction has been formed in Auckland, under warrant to the M.W.G.M., and it has commenced what I trust will prove a useful and prosperous career." A passage in the report of the B. of G.P. is to the same effect. This gave occasion to R.W. Bro. H. J. Williams to propose, and R.W. Bro. Bartlett to second, a motion, "That it be an instruction to the B. of G.P. to consider the advisability of approving or adopting a uniform Ritual or Form of Working, and, if necessary, to recommend to Grand Lodge at the Semi-Annual Communication what steps should be taken to give effect to the proposal." (See G.L., Ann. Podgs., 1898, pp. 21, 15, 20).

Accordingly, at the next general communication, the Semi-Annual Communication held at Napier in October 1898, the B. of G.P. reported as follows :—"Uniform Ritual or Form of Working.—Acting on the instruction of Grand Lodge, your Board appointed a Committee to consider this question, and has now to report—'That the Board, while recognising the importance and desirability of such uniformity, considers that the question of Ritual should be left in abeyance for future consideration.' Whilst upon this question the Board would remind Grand Lodge that the oldest and most powerful Grand Lodge in the world has not yet formulated an authorised edition of Ritual."

An amendment was moved by R.W. Bro. C. J. W. Griffiths, seconded by R.W. L. G. Boor, "That this meeting of Grand Lodge is of opinion that the time has now arrived when, in the interests of the Craft, **one** [italicized in the report] authorised method of working alone should be adopted, and desires that the Board of G.P. will take steps, before the next meeting, to formulate a ritual for the use of all the Lodges under its jurisdiction." The report of proceedings continues:—"Discussed. Amendment put and lost. The clause as printed was then agreed to : *ibid.*, p. 61.

At the next opportunity, the Annual Communication held at Hokitika in April 1899, Bro. Griffiths returned to the charge, and having been given leave to withdraw a notice previously given on Uniform Ritual, gave notice of motion "That Grand Lodge is of opinion that the time has now arrived when, in the interests of the Craft, **one** italicized in the report] authorized method of working alone should be adopted, and desires that

the Board of G.P. will take steps before next meeting to formulate a Ritual for the use of all Lodges in its Jurisdiction." A passage in the report of R.W. Bro. Bartlett as G. Supt., Auckland Dist., received at this communication may be of some significance:—"The working of the lodges is fairly satisfactory—as good as can be expected while the present nondescript system obtains." Ann. Pcdgs., 1899, pp. 13, 22; Ann. Pcdgs., 1899, pp. 19, 22.

Consideration of this motion at the Semi-Annual Communication held at Dunedin in October 1899 was forestalled by a passage in the report of the Board of G.P.—"Recommendations of the Grand Superintendents.—After careful consideration of recommendations received from the Grand Superintendents, the Board came to the following resolutions; . . . (2) 'That the Board approves of a uniform Ritual, and requests the Grand Superintendents to formulate and submit one to the Board.' The report of the proceedings of Grand Lodge says that after discussion, during which R.W. Bro. C. A. C. Hardy [P.B.G.P.] explained that only two Grand Superintendents had declined to undertake the work of formulating such a Ritual, this passage was referred to the Annual Communication to be held at Auckland in the following April, 1900: Ann. Peels., 1899, pp. 70, 73.

On that occasion the postponed report was debated at length, the advantages and difficulties being canvassed to an extent that takes up three pages of the Annual Proceedings, and finally a motion by Bro. Griffiths was amended and carried in the following form:—"That the Grand Superintendents be a Committee to form a ritual, and that the Board allocate the necessary expenses for the Committee to meet and carry out this resolution and that the Committee report to the Board of G.P. within six months:" Ann. Pcdgs., 1900, pp. 7, 19.

The next general communication was the "Half-Yearly" one held at Nelson on 31st October 1900. The Board of G.P. reported that arrangements had been made for the Grand Superintendents to meet in Nelson on 25th October, and a supplementary report on their work would be presented. The supplementary report, in effect the report to the Board of G.P. from the Committee of Grand Superintendents, with the Board's recommendation that it be adopted, occupies three pages of the printed proceedings. The G. Supts. who attended the communication, and presumably constituted the de facto Committee, were R.W. (as they were then) Bros. H. J. Williams (Wellington), A. Bartlett (Auckland), C. J. W. Griffiths (Nelson and Marlborough), W. Ronaldson (Otago), and Wm. Smith (South-land). The G. Supts. of the other masonic districts then established—R.W. Bros W. Gifkins (Canterbury), H. L. Michel (West Coast), and W. Beilby (Hawke's Bay and Gisborne) did not attend the communication.

The Committee's report is still worth the study of any brother interested in ritual development. "The intention throughout has been to interfere as little as possible with the language of Ritual Work as generally known . . . The following rituals have been constituted works of reference —'Emulation' [probably one of the productions of 'A Lewis' purporting to set out the E.C. 'Emulation' Working], Thomson's [the ritual produced by R.W. (as he then was) Bro. Henry Thomson, afterwards the first Grand Master, also purporting to give the 'Emulation' working, as known to E.C. Masons in New Zealand; its preparatory "Points for Masters and Brethren" were adopted by the committees, re-arranged and much enlarged, and appear as the "General and instructions" of the Revised Editorship 1934] ; 'Wilkie's' [so called from the name of its publisher, J. Wilkie, of Dunedin, more correctly 'De Renzi's,' from the name of its compiler; from the title-page 'The New Zealand Ritual of Craft Masonry'; a work of high repute and wide circulation, only very gradually superseded by the Grand Lodge Ritual; distinguished by a certain floweriness of speech in some of its passages, not unwelcome to the taste of our Victorian-age brethren], 'N.S.W.', 'Victoria,' [official publications of those jurisdictions], the 'Revised Work' [another publication of 'A. Lewis'], and the Blue Text Book, [presumably 'The Text Book of Freemasonry . . . compiled by a Member of the Craft,' published in three or more editions by Reeves and Turner of London; issued bound in blue cloth boards]. All of these appear to stem directly or indirectly, from Bro. G. G. Claret's "The Whole of Craft Masonry" which dates from the 1840's. The absence of any reference to an Irish source is to be accounted for by the strictness with which the Grand Lodge of Ireland set its face until very recent times against committing any Masonic ritual to writing, not to say print—always expecting certain charges ethical rather than ceremonial in their character, printed for a century past in the Book of Constitutions, and not differing materially from their counter-parts in English Constitution workings. It is indeed probable that at all times the Irish Constitution Lodges in New Zealand have shown, and still show, greater variations of working than those of any other constitution. As to variations peculiar to lodges of the Scottish Constitution. "In order that the Alternative Third Degree "may be elaborated in detail so as to give the greatest satisfaction and pleasure to former

Scotch Lodges, the labour of preparing this has been relegated to the Grand Secretary [M.W. Bro. Malcolm Niccol], who will consult the most learned of our Scottish Ritualists who practise and advocate this mode." The specific source of various passages is indicated: Pcdgs., Hf.-Yrly Comm. 1900, separately paged, pp. 14, 33.

The Committee sat daily from 10a.m. to 10p.m. from 25th to 30th October. Covering so much ground at such speed, it recognised that slips and oversights were inevitable, and the work would "have to be subject to the most careful revision." There was no time to deal with the installation ceremony. It is probable that with the present custom of inviting the Prov. G.M. or an Asst. Prov. G.M. to conduct the ceremony there has been an increase in local uniformity (not always for the better). On the other hand, divergence between districts has probably increased. A good many years ago a meeting of Prov. G. M.M. so far failed to secure substantial uniformity as to make a formal report not worth offering. It may be mentioned that in 1920 a booklet was issued in Auckland entitled "The Complete Installation Ceremony as used in the Lodges under the Grand Lodge of New Zealand, by a P.M." It has had little, if any, impact outside the Auckland district.

The Ritual Committee recommended, and Grand Lodge decided, that the draft should be multiplied and copies sent to the principal grand officers including grand deacons, with a request that every opportunity be taken to exemplify the work; and that the question of adoption be voted on at the next following Annual Communication. Delay however occurred; there was delay in obtaining "the particular type required" (it is possible that the frequent use of "leaders" in words not spelled out in full necessitated a special order to a type-founder), and when the first proofs were delivered it was found "that the corrections required were so numerous and important that it would not be expedient to have the work exemplified without obtaining a revise from the printer, which could not be done so as to leave time for exemplification before the communication : Pcdgs., Ann. Comm., April 1901, pp. 40, 59. At the next general communication, the half-yearly one held at Dunedin in November 1901, the Board of G.P. was able to report that "the committee appointed to prepare and revise the proposed ritual having completed their work, it was now submitted for the approval of Grand Lodge." (It was not however actually laid before the meeting). "There has not been time to exemplify the work before the Lodges, and it will therefore be for Grand Lodge to decide whether the vote for its adoption should be taken at this communication or deferred till April 1902." An attempt in debate to delay matters until April 1903 was not successful, and the report of the proceedings says, somewhat ambiguously, "The re-commendation now the Board was adopted, subject to the alteration of the word 'adopted' to 'approval' ": Pcdgs., Hfyrly Comm., separately paged, pp. 30, 45.

Finally (as far as approval of the text is concerned) at the Annual Communication held in Wellington in May 1902, the Board of G.P. was able to report that instructions had been given to the G. Supts. of districts to take the necessary steps for exemplification of the proposed ritual, and that the work had met with general approval. No objection had been raised to the general trend and character of the ritual. Grand Lodge was therefore re-commended to approve of it subject to final revision by the Ritual Committee, and to authorize the printing of a first edition of 1000 copies. (There were at this time 121 lodges with a membership of 5737). In debate, proposals for further delay were again urged, but ultimately the following motion put forward by R.W. Bro. Murdoch McLean, G.Supt. of Auckland, was "carried by a large majority. The Ayes numbered 71, the Noes were not recorded." The resolution ran : "That the Ritual be approved by Grand Lodge, and that a Revising Committee of three, consisting of R.W. Bro. [H.J.] Williams [then P. Dep. G.M.], R.W. Bro. [C.J.W.] Griffiths [then G.Supt., Nelson and Marlborough], and W.Bro. T. W. Rowe, be set up the Ritual Committee to make a final revision of the Ritual, but that before printing it they be recommended to consider any suggestions from the G. Supts. of districts in the matter." The mover pointed out that Bros. Williams and Griffiths had taken a keen interest in the ritual question, and that Bro. Rowe was eminently qualified to assist in revising the language employed : Ann. Pcdgs., 1901-2, pp. 39, 46, 49.

Bro. Thos. W. Rowe, it may be mentioned, was a past master of New Zealand Pacific Lodge No. 2, and was at this time Chief Librarian of the Wellington City Public Library. Born in Christchurch in 1863, he was educated at Christ's College Grammar School, whence a Junior University Scholarship took him to Canterbury College, where he had a distinguished academic career. Besides winning college exhibitions in English, Latin and Natural Science, he took his B.A. degree in 1885, and his M.A. in 1886, with first-class honours in Languages and Literature. He also won a Senior University Scholarship in Latin and English, and another in Natural Science (Botany). In later life he returned to Christchurch and took the degree of L.L.B., becoming a Law Lecturer at Canterbury College and a Barister and Solicitor in the city. He died in 1928. A short memoir appears in the 2nd edition of Bro. G. H. Schofield's "Who's Who in New Zealand" (1925).

Another appears in Bro. R. C. G. Weston's "Centennial History of New Zealand Pacific Lodge" (1942) p. 239. His private library of some 5500 volumes was lost in a dwelling house fire in 1901, but he built up a second collection amounting to 7000 volumes.

Next year (half-yearly communications having now been discontinued) the Board of G.P. reported that the Ritual Revision Committee had met in Wellington in October [1902] and finally corrected and revised the work, and it was hoped that the first edition would be ready for issue during June [1903]. In the following year it was reported that the one thousand copies of the first edition had been sold out before it was issued, and a second issue of 500 copies had been obtained, and authority was sought to order a third issue to hold in stock. Grand Lodge was re-commended to place on record its deep indebtedness to M.W. (as he had now become) Bro. Williams, R.W. Bro. Griffiths, and W.Bro. Rowe for their arduous and eminently successful labours, which had resulted in placing the lodges in possession of a reliable and consistent standard form of working. The clause was adopted: Ann. Pcdgs., 1902-3, p. 51; 1903-4, pp. 74, 85.

At some subsequent date, the Board of G.P. made certain surreptitious changes in further issues, neither directed by nor reported to a general communication. Two that have been detected are:—a substitution for "pedestal" of the inappropriate term "altar" in the explanation of a diagram of a lodge-room (omitted from the Revised Edition of 1934) ; and a change in the points of the compass referred to in the Exhortation in the Alternative Third Degree.

What use was to be made of the Grand Lodge Ritual if and when it was approved and issued was the subject of continued debate; but that is another story.

The soundness of the judgment of the grand superintendents who planned the main lines of the ritual and made a choice amongst the various workings known to them, and the meticulous care of the small revision committee that attended to details of wording, may be judged by the small amount of change made when a revised edition appeared in 1934, following three years of study by another small revision committee. The idea of introducing alternative forms may be debatable, but was probably a happy compromise for the needs of a jurisdiction which was, and remains, so decentralised as New Zealand ; it has indeed been extended in the 1934 revision. The only substantial alterations made in 1934 were the insertion of an alternative explanation of the W.T. of the First Degree, Added (it is believed) to meet the wishes of brethren of the Auckland District; alternative shortened explanations of the First & Second Tracing Boards, added in the hope (not indeed realized) that every candidate would hear them before proceeding to a higher degree; and the addition of an explanation of the Third Tracing Board, formed on traditional lines but shorn of some of the grotesque factual misstatements that had led to the total omission of any explanation of its emblems from the original edition.

If a final personal note be permissible, the view is offered that the time is now ripe for another revision less timid perhaps than that of 1934; partly to pick up errors and oversights (there are several) left in that revision; partly to demonstrate that the ritual was made for Masons, not Masons for the ritual; and partly to avoid the ossification which seems to overtake all rituals, liturgies, and formulas that are cherished too long without taking account of changes in human values and in theological and ethical opinion, and discoveries in cosmology. For instance, the eighteenth century theological doctrine of "rewards and punishments"—"pie in the sky" to the irreverent, as presented in Butler's "Analogy of Religion" though not entirely scouted by conservative theologians, is recognized as being not among the highest motions that can be urged for right behaviour. Again, the old "three-decker" cosmos of heaven, earth, and hell, has long been obsolete.

The accepted principles of relativity appear to entail acceptance of the physical fact that besides existing in a world of three dimensions of extension in space and one of extension in time, we also exist in a cosmos which is at least four-dimensional; though the concept is incapable of being visualized consciously by the ordinary human mind. Again, the reference in a certain charge to an "indissoluble attachment" to the country of one's birth cannot, since naturalization laws have come into force, be of much assistance to anyone who, as part of the process of striking new roots in the country of his choice, seeks admission to our fraternity. But these thoughts may lead us too far from what is intended to be a modest note about the ritual as we have it today.